

It's Tantillo's time

New superintendent has high expectations

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DUXBURY – Someone who started his career teaching juvenile delinquents social studies is probably ready for anything.

And Dr. Benedict Tantillo, the new superintendent of the Duxbury School system, is getting ready.

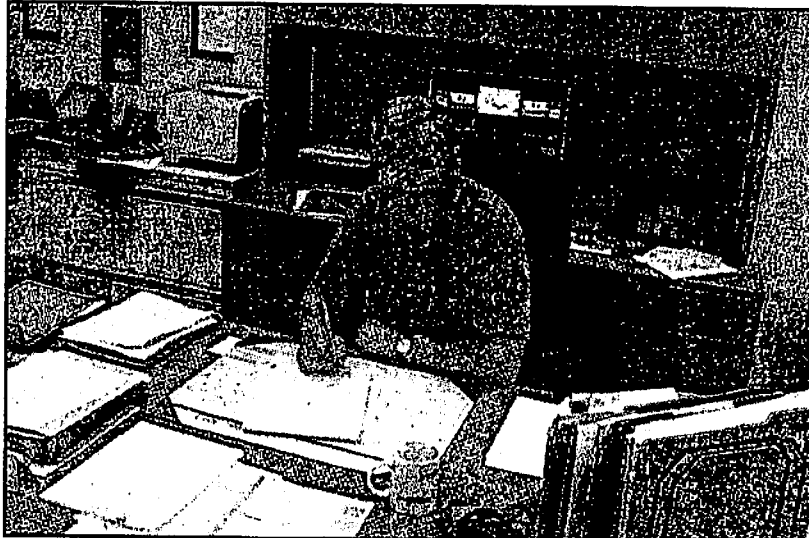
He's been officially on the job for three weeks and he's anxious for the school year to start. Before the first bell rings, he's been visiting the schools and meeting with principals, members of the School Committee, staff and new teachers.

"Everyone's been very helpful," he noted.

He's also had a chance to get out of the office and tour around Duxbury a bit, on the lookout for good lunch spots.

He's also met a few parents, mostly the ones who have dropped by the central office to pick up their children's bus passes.

A discussion of the expected changes to the state academic standards gives an indication of what his expectations are for the Duxbury students. While the state has agreed to join a new set of national standards, they are expected to be heavily influenced by the ones Massachusetts has followed, which are considered to be among the most stringent in the country. Nonetheless, Tantillo noted that those standards are a minimum. "Duxbury isn't shooting for the minimum," he said.



STAFF PHOTO/MATTHEW NADLER
Dr. Benedict Tantillo has been on the job as superintendent since the beginning of August.

Students, teachers and parents can expect a visible superintendent. He will be a regular presence in the schools, visiting each building at least weekly. Tantillo plans on being at as many athletic and academic events as possible. And some Duxbury High School students will be in for a surprise – Dr. Tantillo will lead their advisory group.

He also plans to keep the schools in the public eye with a regular newsletter that will offer updates on the schools and offer an opportunity for the district to celebrate the achievements of the students and faculty.

Tantillo came to Duxbury from the Pascack Valley Regional High School District in Bergen County, N.J. One of his signature achievements was the introduction of a program that provided laptop computers to every student in the district's two schools.

"It changes the way we teach and study," he said. Having laptop computers helps students prepare for a changing, and global, economy. Someday, he predicted, all schools will provide their students with such individual technology.

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But before that can happen, plans for a new high school and middle school need to go forward. When work starts on them, the wireless infrastructure needed to make a laptop per child program successful can be installed.

Tantillo admitted that the condition of the two buildings surprised him and that, with the help of Town Manager Richard MacDonald and Finance Director John Madden, he been learning the ins and out of school budgeting, Massachusetts style. "They've been very helpful," he said.

In the immediate future, the new superintendent says he has to first spend time assessing the district before introducing any changes, though he wants to see more interdisciplinary courses, such as an American Studies class co-taught by English and social studies teachers, or a class led by a math and physics teachers.

The first students who will get a chance to meet the new superintendent will be the district's newest students, as Tantillo plans to spend his first school morning greeting the new kindergarten class at the Chandler School.

Five things about Dr. Benedict Tantillo

1. Tantillo has taught English, social studies and physical education.

2. He served as a vice-principal, principal and athletic director in New Jersey schools before he became superintendent in Pascack Valley.

3. Having grown up in Connecticut, he says his circle of friends was evenly divided between Red Sox and Yankees fans. Leaving New Jersey meant he had to give up his Yankees' season-tickets, which he shared with nine friends. He says the Red Sox are his second favorite team.

4. Tantillo lives in Harwich and says that the commute from the Cape to Duxbury is easier than the one he faced in New Jersey, when he drove from Bernardsville, in the central part of the state, to Montvale, which is on the border with New York.

5. He attended West Virginia Wesleyan University, where he played football.